

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

**The claims in this listing will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application.**

1. (Original) A linear guide mechanism for guiding rings supporting components of a lens barrel along an optical axis; the mechanism comprising:
  - an outer ring supporting a first imaging component;
  - an inner ring positioned radially inwardly of said outer ring for supporting a second imaging component;
  - a first guide ring configured to linearly guide the outer ring without rotation of the outer ring;
  - a second guide ring configured to linearly guide the inner ring without rotation of the inner ring; and
  - a linear guide ring having at least one guide portion located on an inner peripheral surface of the linear guide ring, said at least one guide portion engageable with said first and second guide rings, said outer ring and said inner ring being independently guidable via the respective first and second guide rings and are movable linearly along said optical axis without rotating.
2. (Original) The linear guide mechanism according to claim 1, wherein said at least one guide portion comprises a pair of guide portions each respectively engageable with the first guide ring and the second guide ring.

3. (Original) The linear guide mechanism according to claim 1, wherein said linear guide ring is positioned radially outwardly of said outer ring.

4. (Original) The linear guide mechanism according to claim 2, wherein said guide portion engageable with the first guide ring comprises at least one first guide ring linear guide groove extending generally parallel to said optical axis; and

wherein said first guide ring has at least one guide projection located on an outer peripheral surface thereof and engageable in said first guide ring linear guide groove.

5. (Original) The linear guide mechanism according to claim 4, wherein the first guide ring comprises at least one outer ring linear guide groove located on an inner peripheral surface thereof and extending generally parallel to said optical axis; and

wherein said outer ring comprises at least one guide projection located on an outer peripheral surface thereof and engaged in said outer ring linear guide groove.

6. (Original) The linear guide mechanism according to claim 4, wherein a plurality of first guide ring linear guide grooves are provided around the circumference of the linear guide ring.

7. (Original) The linear guide mechanism according to claim 2, wherein said guide portion engageable with the second guide ring comprises at least one second guide ring linear guide groove extending generally parallel to said optical axis; and

wherein said second guide ring has at least one guide projection projecting radially

outwardly therefrom and engageable in said second guide ring linear guide groove.

8. (Original) A linear guide mechanism according to claim 7, wherein said second guide ring comprises at least one linear guide key extending generally parallel to said optical axis; and wherein said inner ring comprises at least one inner ring linear guide groove engageable with said linear guide key.

9. (Original) The linear guide mechanism according to claim 7, wherein said at least one second guide ring linear guide groove comprises a plurality of second guide ring linear guide grooves, provided around the circumference of the linear guide ring.

10. (Original) The linear guide mechanism according to claim 7, wherein said second guide ring linear guide groove comprises generally parallel aligned pairs of grooves; and wherein said guide portion engageable with the first guide ring is circumferentially located between the aligned pairs of grooves.

11. (Original) The linear guide mechanism according to claim 10, wherein said guide portion engageable with the first guide ring comprises at least one first guide ring linear guide groove extending generally parallel to said optical axis.

12. (Original) The linear guide mechanism according to claim 1, further comprising a cam ring having at least one outer cam groove located on an outer peripheral surface thereof, and at least one inner cam groove located on an inner peripheral surface thereof; wherein the outer ring includes at least one cam follower projecting radially inwardly and

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engageable in said outer cam groove of said cam ring; and

wherein the inner ring includes at least one cam follower projecting radially outwardly and engageable in said inner cam groove of said cam ring.

13. (Original) The linear guide mechanism according to claim 12, wherein said second guide ring comprises a ring portion supported by a rear end portion of said cam ring, the cam ring being rotatable relative to said ring portion and immovable relative to said ring portion in said optical axis direction.

14. (Original) The linear guide mechanism according to claim 1, further comprising a stationary barrel which supports said linear guide ring and guides said linear guide ring linearly in said optical axis direction without rotating said linear guide ring.

15. (Original) The linear guide mechanism according to claim 1, wherein said first guide ring is positioned radially outwardly of said outer ring.

16. (Original) The linear guide mechanism according to claim 1, wherein said lens barrel is incorporated in a camera.

17. (Original) A linear guide mechanism of a lens barrel, comprising:  
a cam ring having at least one outer cam groove and at least one inner cam groove which are formed on an outer peripheral surface and an inner peripheral surface of said cam ring, respectively;

an outer movable ring positioned radially outside said cam ring, supporting a first

imaging component, and including an inward cam follower which projects radially inwards to be engaged in said outer cam groove of said cam ring;

an inner movable ring positioned radially inside said cam ring, supporting a second imaging component, and including an outward cam follower which projects radially outwards to be engaged in said inner cam groove of said cam ring;

a non-rotatable linear guide ring positioned radially outside said cam ring, said linear guide ring including at least one linear guide portion located on an inner peripheral surface of said linear guide ring to extend parallel to an optical axis of said lens barrel;

a first linearly-guided ring directly guided linearly by said linear guide portion of said linear guide ring without rotating; and

a second linearly-guided ring directly guided linearly by said linear guide portion of said linear guide ring without rotating,

wherein said outer movable ring and said inner movable ring are independently linearly guidable along said optical axis without rotating, by one and the other of said first linearly-guided ring and said second linearly-guided ring, respectively.

18. (Original) The linear guide mechanism according to claim 17, wherein said linear guide ring is positioned radially outside said outer movable ring.

19. (Original) The linear guide mechanism according to claim 17, wherein said linear guide portion of said linear guide ring comprises at least one first linear guide groove extending

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generally parallel to said optical axis,

wherein said first linearly-guided ring comprises:

a first linear guide projection located on an outer peripheral surface of said first linearly-guided ring and engageable in said first linear guide groove; and

a second linear guide groove located on an inner peripheral surface of said first linearly-guided ring and extending generally parallel to said optical axis,

wherein said outer movable ring comprises a second linear guide projection located on an outer peripheral surface of said outer movable ring and engageable in said second linear guide groove;

wherein said linear guide portion of said linear guide ring comprises a third linear guide groove extending parallel to said optical axis;

wherein said inner movable ring comprises a fourth linear guide groove extending generally parallel to said optical axis; and

wherein said second linearly-guided ring comprises:

a ring portion supported by a rear end portion of said cam ring and immovable relative to said cam ring in said optical axis direction and allows said cam ring to rotate relative to said ring portion;

a third linear guide projection which projects radially outwards from said ring portion and is engageable in said third linear guide groove; and

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a linear guide key which projects from a radially inner edge of said ring portion and extends in said optical axis direction and is engageable in said fourth linear guide groove.

20. (Original) The linear guide mechanism according to claim 19, wherein said first linear guide groove comprises a plurality of first linear guide grooves located at different circumferential positions, and

wherein said third linear guide groove comprises a plurality of third linear guide grooves located at different circumferential positions.

21. (Original) The linear guide mechanism according to claim 17, further comprising a stationary barrel which supports said linear guide ring and is configured to guide said linear guide ring linearly in said optical axis direction without rotating said linear guide ring.

22. (Original) The linear guide mechanism according to claim 17, wherein said first imaging component comprises a first movable lens group,

wherein said second imaging component comprises a second movable lens group, and

wherein said first movable lens group and said second movable lens group are movable in said optical axis direction in a predetermined moving manner in accordance with a rotation of said cam ring.

23. (Original) The linear guide mechanism according to claim 17, wherein said lens barrel is an imaging lens, said second imaging component comprising at least one of a lens group, an adjustable diaphragm and a shutter.

24. (New) A digital camera having a body, a lens barrel and a linear guide mechanism for guiding rings supporting components of a lens barrel along an optical axis, the lens barrel and mechanism housed within the body, the mechanism comprising:

an outer ring supporting a first imaging component;

an inner ring positioned radially inwardly of said outer ring for supporting a second imaging component;

a first guide ring configured to linearly guide the outer ring without rotation of the outer ring;

a second guide ring configured to linearly guide the inner ring without rotation of the inner ring; and

a linear guide ring having at least one guide portion located on an inner peripheral surface of the linear guide ring, said at least one guide portion engageable with said first and second guide rings, said outer ring and said inner ring being independently guidable via the respective first and second guide rings and are movable linearly along said optical axis without rotating.

25. (New) The camera according to claim 24, wherein said at least one guide portion comprises a pair of guide portions each respectively engageable with the first guide ring and the second guide ring.

26. (New) The camera according to claim 24, wherein said linear guide ring is positioned radially outwardly of said outer ring.



27. (New) The camera according to claim 24, further comprising a cam ring having at least one outer cam groove located on an outer peripheral surface thereof, and at least one inner cam groove located on an inner peripheral surface thereof;

wherein the outer ring includes at least one cam follower projecting radially inwardly and engageable in said outer cam groove of said cam ring; and

wherein the inner ring includes at least one cam follower projecting radially outwardly and engageable in said inner cam groove of said cam ring.

28. (New) The camera according to claim 24, further comprising a stationary barrel which supports said linear guide ring and guides said linear guide ring linearly in said optical axis direction without rotating said linear guide ring.

29. (New) The camera according to claim 24, wherein said first guide ring is positioned radially outwardly of said outer ring.